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Senator encouraged by local response during Senate Education Committee hearing

LANSING -- Area residents voiced their concerns in regard to the state's proposal for increased graduation requirements with members of the state Senate Education Committee Tuesday evening at Milan High School. School administrators, parents, and students shared their personal experiences with the committee and offered their suggestions to revise the recommended requirements.

Several students and parents from the Washtenaw Technical Middle College testified in favor of flexibility for students to take accelerated courses beyond the proposed graduation requirements. State Sen. Beverly Hammerstrom, R-Temperance, attended the hearing and was pleased with the response from those in attendance.

"I was very impressed with those who testified at Tuesday's hearing," Hammerstrom said. "The most convincing testimony came from the students themselves. They offered the committee a personal look into their own educations and the success they've achieved. Their input will be considered heavily as my colleagues and I discuss this matter further."

The Senate is considering a proposal from the state superintendent and State Board of Education that would implement graduation requirements beyond that of a half year of civics class now required. The plan would require students to take certain courses for a certain number of years, or equivalent credit, in various subjects including English, math, science and social sciences.

Approximately 75 people attended the last in a series of hearings that were held around the state to gain input from residents.

"I was proud to see representatives from the Milan, Saline, Manchester, and Lincoln Consolidated school districts address the committee with their thoughts on the state's proposal," Hammerstrom said. "I was disheartened, however, by the lack of testimony offered by any Monroe County schools, as the meeting was held within minutes of many of the districts."

"This was a perfect opportunity for all of the schools in the 17th Senate District to speak to the members of the State Board of Education, the Department of Education, as well as the legislators, and offer their input. I wish more would have taken advantage of this opportunity."

"The future of Michigan depends greatly on our children. It is imperative we all work together to ensure they have the tools necessary to succeed."

Michigan is among a handful of states with minimal statewide graduation requirements. Currently, Michigan's local school boards decide graduation requirements.

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